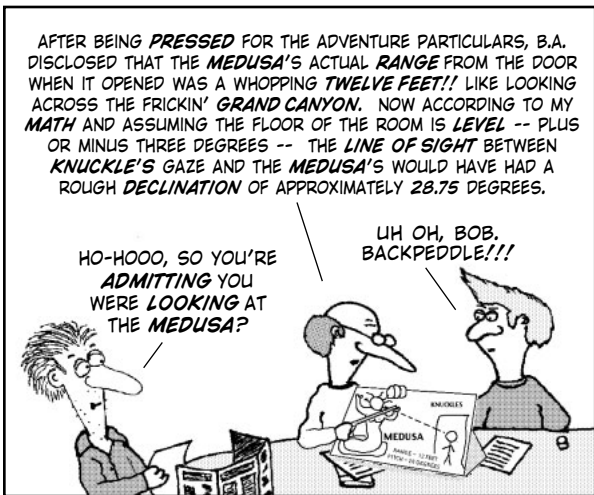
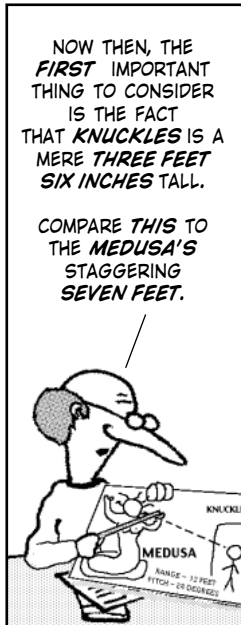
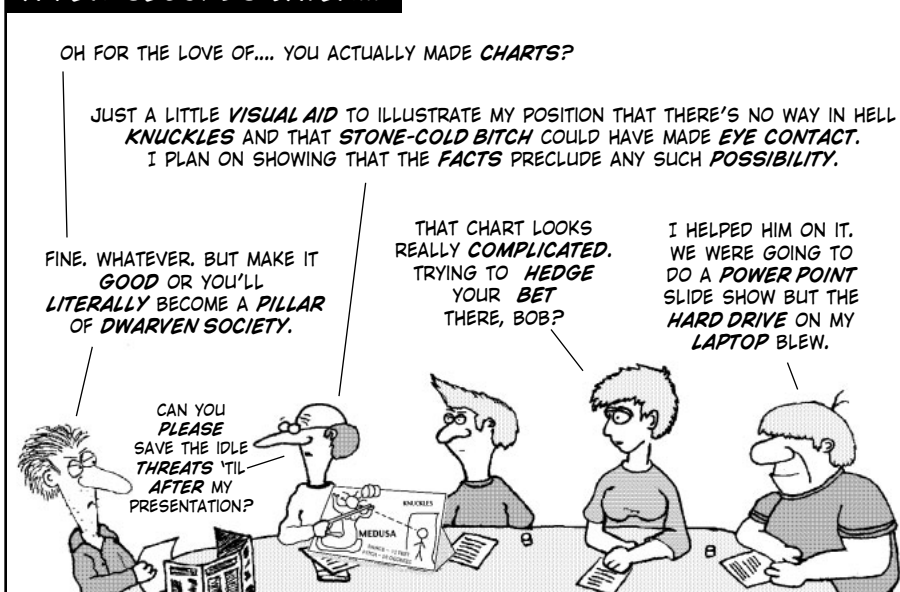


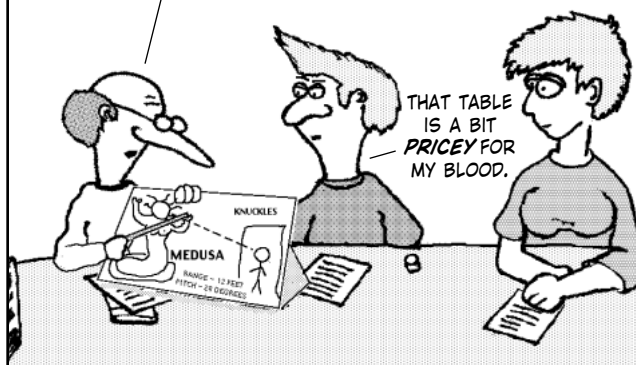
## A FEW SECONDS LATER...



<sup>1</sup> See page 36: "Made You Look"

<sup>2</sup> B.A. agreed that only **ONE** player would actually be turned to stone by the Medusa's gaze after Brian cited a famous HMPA case which decided "any character who sees another character petrify should be afforded an opportunity to interpret the petrification as sufficient warning that a Basilisk is visible and avert their gaze."

NOW IT'S **COMMON KNOWLEDGE** THAT **KNUCKLES** DRESSES IN THE **TRADITIONAL STYLE** OF THE **DWARVES OF PRAXTER**. I WON'T GO INTO **ALL** THE **DETAILS** BUT **ONE PART** OF HIS **ENSEMBLE** INCLUDES A **HOODED JERKIN** -- **ITEM 142** ON THE **GARMENTS, FINE, LEATHER** SUBTABLE ON THE **STANDARD PRICE LIST** FROM THE **PLAYER'S HANDBOOK**.



NOW **HERE** WE HAVE A **BLOW UP** OF THE **COVER** OF THE **PAPERBACK EDITION** OF **STURM PYRE'S LEGACY** -- A **HACKMASTERS OF EVERKNIGHT** **NOVELLA**. **OL' STURM** **HERE** IS WEARING A **HOODED JERKIN** OF THE TYPE I JUST DESCRIBED. YOU WILL NOTICE HOW THE **HOOD** IS **PULLED LOW** OVER THE **BROW**. THIS IS THE **ACCEPTED NORM** FOR WEARING THIS **GARMENT**.

OKAY, SO YOU KNOW YOUR **DWARVEN FASHION**. WHAT'S YOUR POINT?



A **LINE-OF-SIGHT** DECLINATION OF **28.75 DEGREES** COMBINED WITH A **HOOD-PROTRUSION** OVER THE **BROW** OF APPROXIMATELY **THREE AND A QUARTER INCHES** CONSTITUTES A **VISUAL OBSTRUCTION** -- WHICH ALL ADDS UP TO ONLY **ONE** REASONABLE CONCLUSION -- **KNUCKLES** **COULD NOT** SEE THE **MEDUSA'S EYES** FROM HIS **VANTAGE POINT**.

GIMME A BREAK. YOU'VE GOT A **NECK** DON'T YOU? YOU DIDN'T **FACTOR** IN **HEAD-TILT**.

ACTUALLY I HAVE A **CHART** HERE WHICH SHOWS THAT MY **BOLT POUCH** AND **PACK FRAME** WOULD HAVE **SEVERELY LIMITED** MY RANGE OF **NECK MOTION**.....

**HAR HAR!!!** WHAT DID I **TELL** YOU BOB? I **KNEW** B.A. WOULD COUNTER WITH THAT **ARGUMENT**. YOU GOT HIM ON THE **RUN** -- NOW TAKE IT **HOME!!**

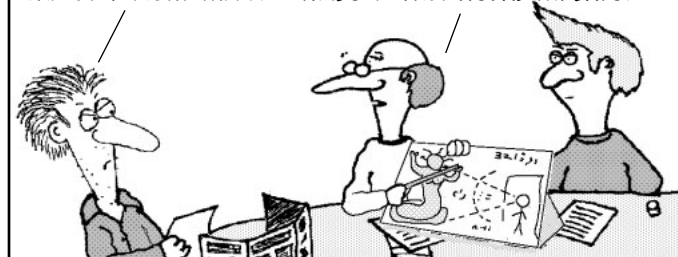


## TWENTY SIX MINUTES LATER...

...AND WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT **KNUCKLES** WAS **STANDING DIRECTLY** IN THE **DOORWAY** -- **BACKLIT**, MIND YOU, BY THE **FLAMES** FROM THE **TORCH BEARER'S** **TORCH** IT SHOULD BE **OBVIOUS** THAT MY **INFRAVISION** WAS **TOTALLY** **DIMINISHED**. I WAS **PRACTICALLY** **BLIND**.

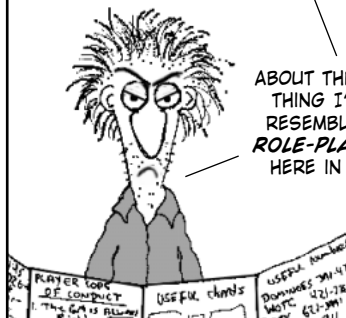
OKAY, I'VE HEARD **ENOUGH** BOB. YOU CAN **STOP** RIGHT THERE.

STOP? B-B-BUT I'M NOT FINISHED. I STILL HAVE SOME **CHARTS** SHOWING **KNUCKLE'S** **AVERAGE REACTION TIMES** TO **PAST VISUAL THREATS**.



NO NEED TO SHOW THEM TO ME. -SIGH- YOU'VE **CONVINCED** ME THAT **KNUCKLES** ISN'T THE **ONE** TO **TURN TO** **STONE**. I DON'T REALLY **AGREE** WITH YOUR **LOGIC** BUT **NEVERTHELESS**, I'M GOING TO **REWARD** YOU FOR AT LEAST TAKING THIS **SERIOUSLY** AND MAKING A **WELL THOUGHT OUT** ATTEMPT TO **SAVE** YOUR OWN **ASS**.

ABOUT THE CLOSEST THING I'VE SEEN **RESEMBLING** **REAL** **ROLE-PLAY** **AROUND** HERE IN **MONTHS**.



OH C'MON, B.A. THAT'S TOTALLY **UNFAIR!** I **POURED** MY **HEART** INTO **TEFLON BILLY'S** EULOGY AT **MADAME FANIGAN'S** WAKE. YOU EVEN GAVE ME A +5 MODIFIER ON MY **ROUSING SPEECH** ROLL WHICH INDICATED THE **CROWD** WAS MOVED TO TEARS. IF THAT'S WASN'T **GOOD** ROLE-PLAY WHAT THE **HELL** IS?

WADDA YA MEAN YOU **POURED** YOUR **HEART** INTO IT? YOU SIMPLY ANNOUNCED, "LET'S GET THIS **BITCH** IN THE GROUND" AND **TOSSED** THE DICE. I GAVE YOU THE **MODIFIER** BECAUSE **TEFLON** WAS **INEBRIATED** AND EVERYONE **LOVES** A **DRUNK** -- NOT BECAUSE I WAS **IMPRESSED** WITH YOUR **ROLE-PLAY**.

WHAT A **RIP!** YOU TRY TO GO THE **EXTRA MILE** IN THIS **CAMPAIGN** AND YOU GET **SQUAT**.



NOW THAT'S NOT **EXACTLY** TRUE, BRIAN. YOU **DID** MANAGE TO **SHAKE DOWN** **WIDOWER FANIGAN** FOR 300 GOLD PIECES FOR YOUR "**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**".

HEY, THE **MAN** WANTED A **SPEECH** - HE **GOT** ONE. IT'S NOT **MY** FAULT HE DIDN'T TAKE ME **SERIOUSLY** WHEN I TOLD HIM THERE WOULD BE A **SMALL FEE**.



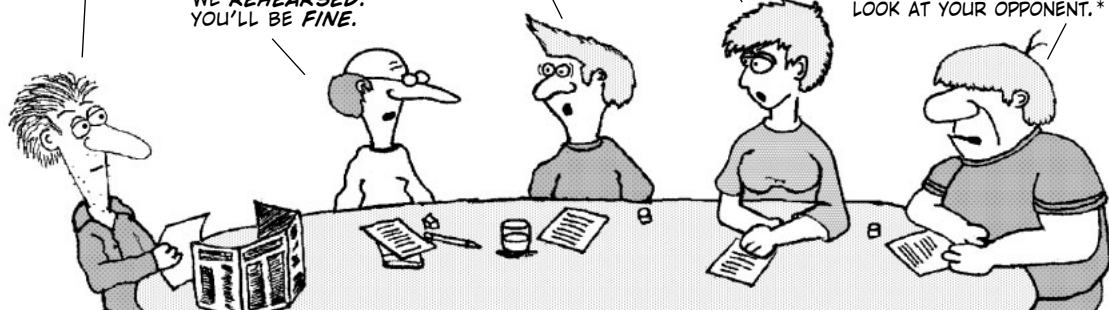
OKAY DAVE, YOU'RE ON DECK. TELL ME **WHY** YOUR **CHARACTER** SHOULDN'T BE TURNED TO STONE.

DAMN, BOB. YOU'RE A **TOUGH ACT** TO FOLLOW DUDE.

JUST DO IT THE WAY WE **REHEARSED**. YOU'LL BE **FINE**.

YOU GUYS **REHEARSED?** OH I CAN'T **WAIT** TO HEAR THIS.

DAVE, FOR **YOUR** SAKE I CERTAINLY HOPE YOU'RE NOT STILL **CLINGING** TO YOUR **STANCE** THAT YOU ALWAYS **FOCUS** ON THE END OF YOUR **SWORD** AND **NEVER** LOOK AT YOUR **OPPONENT**. \*



BECAUSE IF YOU **ARE**, YOU'LL BE **TREADING** ON SOME VERY **THIN ICE**. IF YOU **INSIST** THAT **EL RAVAGER** NEVER **LOOKS** AT HIS **OPPONENTS** WHEN **ATTACKING** YOU'RE LEAVING YOURSELF **WIDE OPEN** FOR B.A. TO SLAP A **PERMANENT** **NEGATIVE TO-HIT** MODIFIER ON YA. I JUST THOUGHT I'D **POINT** THAT OUT.

BUT IT'S THE **ONLY** ARGUMENT I GOT!!

BRIAN? THAT WAS CERTAINLY **TACKY**. YOU JUST **POINTED** IT OUT TO **B.A.** AS WELL.

OH... DID I?

SORRY. MY **BAD**.



AH, THE **HELL** WITH IT. I'LL BE **HONEST**, B.A. -- I'VE GOT **NOTHING**.

I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO **WASTE** YOUR TIME.



DUDE, WHAT THE **HELL** ARE ARE YOU DOING? YOU'RE **FIGHTING** FOR YOUR **LIFE** HERE.

I'M **THROWING** MYSELF AT THE **MERCY** OF THE **GM**.

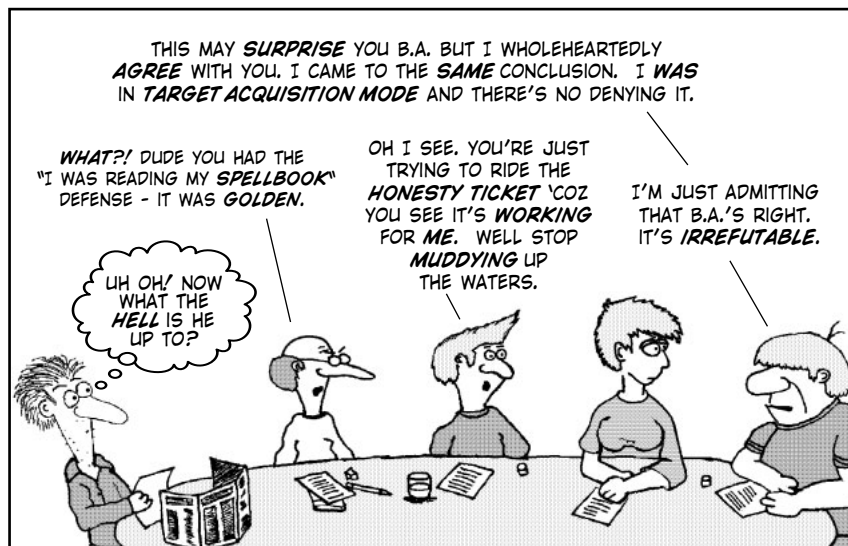
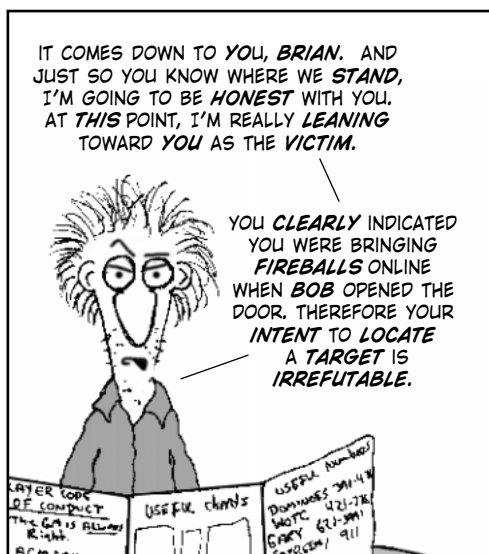
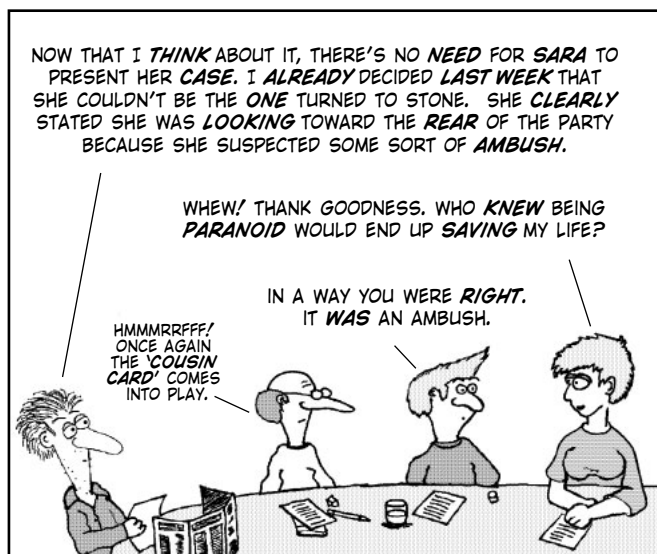
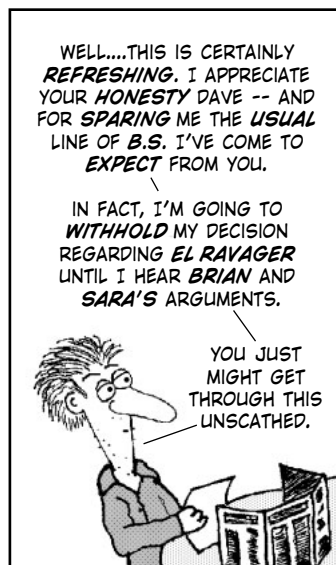
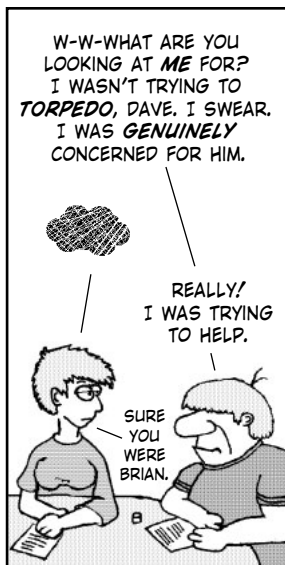
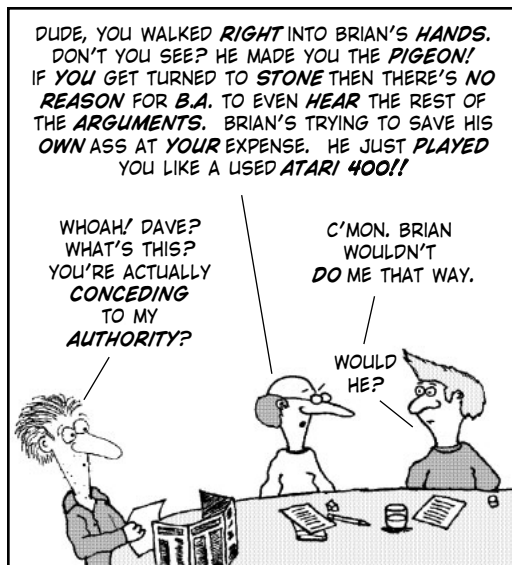
MERCY OF THE **GM**? THERE'S NO SUCH ANIMAL.

WHATEVER.



\* See page 36 "Made You Look"

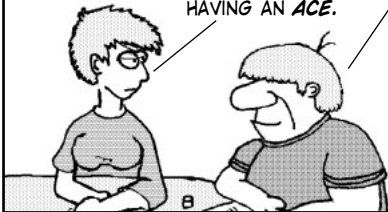




OKAY BRIAN. WHAT IS IT *THIS TIME*? A *LOOPHOLE*? SOME *SHODDY RULE* YOU FOUND A WAY TO *EXPLOIT*?

NAAAA, NOTHING LIKE THAT. IN FACT I *REALLY* THOUGHT I WAS *TOAST*. I WRACKED MY BRAIN *ALL WEEK* BUT COULDN'T COME UP WITH A SINGLE *VALID* ARGUMENT TO SAVE MY *SORRY BUTT*!

THEN WHAT GIVES? YOU MENTIONED HAVING AN *ACE*.



I ONLY *STUMBLER* UPON IT *LAST NIGHT*. TALK ABOUT YER *LATE HOUR REPRIEVES*. IMAGINE MY *EMBARRASSMENT* WHEN I REALIZED MY *OVERSIGHT*. IT WAS *RECORDED* RIGHT THERE ON MY *CHARACTER SHEET* THE *WHOLE* TIME. LIKE A *BIG GOOF* I'D SIMPLY *FORGOTTEN* ALL ABOUT IT.

FORGOT ABOUT WHAT, BRIAN? IS THIS ONE OF YOUR *TRICKS*? COZ IF IT IS, I'M NOT GOING TO...

NO, IT'S NO *TRICK*, B.A. I *ASSURE* YOU THIS IS *TOTALLY* LEGIT. YOU REMEMBER ABOUT *EIGHT YEARS* AGO WHEN I WAS RUNNING *TEFLON'S* FATHER, *CRIMSON LOTUS*?\*



*CRIMSON LOTUS*? SURE I REMEMBER HIM. HE *DIED* DURING THE *THREE RIVERS ORDEAL*. BUT WHAT'S HE GOT TO DO WITH THE *HERE AND NOW*?

WELL AS YOU MAY RECALL, *CRIMSON LOTUS* AND *SCORN-DEXTER THE HALFLING MONK* WENT UP AGAINST A TOUGH-ASS *BURROWING BASILISK* IN THE *DARK HORDES OF DEVASTATION* ADVENTURE. WE HAD A *DEVIL* OF A TIME TRYING TO *DEFEAT* THAT *CRITTER*.

OBVIOUSLY I REMEMBER. I *WROTE* THAT ADVENTURE. WHERE YOU GOING WITH THIS?

LOOKS LIKE HE HAS AN *ACE* UP HIS SLEEVE AFTERALL. I *KNOW* THAT VOICE -- IT'S JUST *DRIPPING* WITH CONFIDENCE.

THIS SHOULD BE *GOOD*.

TO OVERCOME THAT MONSTER, *CRIMSON LOTUS* DEVISED A *NEW* MAGIC ITEM OF HIS *OWN DESIGN*.



*CRIMSON'S INVISIBLE HELM OF GAZE-AVERSION*!

*INVISIBLE HELM*? SOUNDS INTERESTING. WHAT IS IT?

IT'S AN INVISIBLE SILVER *GREAT HELM* WITH THE *VISOR* WELDED SHUT. ON THE *INSIDE* OF THE *VISOR* A *PERPETUAL ILLUSION SPELL* SHOWS THE *WEARER* WHAT HE WOULD *SEE* IF HE WEREN'T WEARING THE *HELMET*.

IT WAS ONE OF MY *FIRST* ATTEMPTS TO USE *MAGIC* TO MIMIC *HIGH-TECH GADGETRY*. THE *HELM* WAS DESIGNED TO BE A SORT OF *MAGICAL VR HEADS-UP DISPLAY*!

THE *BEAUTY* OF THE THING IS THAT *NO ONE* KNOWS YOU'RE WEARING IT.



\* See *Tales from the Vault Volume One*: Crimson Lotus was a mage Brian ran in B.A.'s first campaign. Crimson kept a detailed journal of his adventures which (Brian maintains) was passed down from character to character until it finally fell into the hands of Black Lotus (Teflon Billy's true name) his great, great, great grandson.

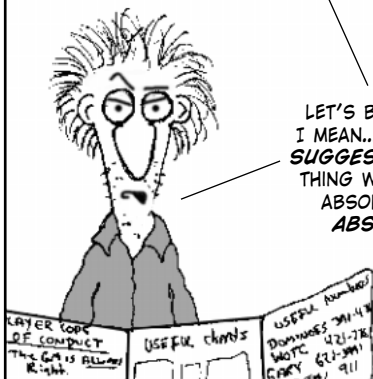
BUT THAT'S NOT *ALL*. ANOTHER *SWEET FEATURE* OF THE *HELM* IS THAT THE WEARER CAN USE A *MENTAL COMMAND* TO TEMPORARILY *TURN OFF* THE *AURA OF INVISIBILITY*. *CRIMSON LOTUS* SIMPLY *WALKED* UP TO THE *BASILISK* AND GOT THE CREATURE TO *GAZE* AT HIM. WHEN HE MADE THE *HELM VISIBLE* THE *BASILISK* SAW HIS *OWN GAZE* ON THE *HELM'S* REFLECTIVE SURFACE AND *TURNED TO STONE*.  
-SNICKER- YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE *LOOK* ON THAT *BASILISK'S* FACE -- IT WAS *COMICAL*.

THAT'S *INGENIOUS*, BRIAN.  
BUT I DON'T SEE HOW IT *HELPS* YOU.



SHE'S *RIGHT*, BRIAN. WHY ARE YOU WASTING OUR TIME WITH ALL THIS? IT'S NOT LIKE *TEFLON BILLY* EVEN *HAS* THE *HELMET*. AND EVEN IF HE *DID* I DON'T THINK HE'D BE *WALKING AROUND WEARING IT ALL THE TIME* ON THE *OFF CHANCE* HE MIGHT RUN INTO A *MEDUSA* OR *BASILISK*.

LET'S BE *REAL*.  
I MEAN....TO EVEN *SUGGEST* SUCH A THING WOULD BE *ABSOLUTELY ABSURD*.



YEAH, I SUPPOSE IT *WOULD* BE *ABSRD* IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE FACT THAT THE *HELM* WAS HANDED DOWN TO *TEFLON BILLY* ALONG WITH *CRIMSON LOTUS' JOURNAL* AND OTHER PERSONAL EFFECTS. IT'S CLEARLY LISTED ON *CRIMSON'S* LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT. *TEFLON* EVEN *PAWNED* IT ONCE WHEN HE WAS DOWN ON HIS LUCK.

ANYWAY, LAST NIGHT AS I WAS GOING OVER MY NOTES I NOTICED *CRIMSON'S HELM* LISTED ON MY *CHARACTER SHEET* IN REALLY *SMALL PRINT*.



AND *RIGHT THERE* BESIDE THE *ENTRY* ARE THE WORDS, "*TEFLON BILLY WEARS THE HELM AT ALL TIMES*." *HAR HAR!!* CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? I WAS *SWEATIN' BULLETS* FOR *NOTHING!* I'M SO *EMBARRASSED*. NOT LIKE ME TO FORGET A *DETAIL* LIKE THAT.

YOU HAVE *GOT* TO BE *KIDDING*.  
ARE YOU FOR *REAL?*

IT'S ALL *RIGHT HERE* ON MY *CHARACTER SHEET*. WANNA SEE?

AS A *MATTER OF FACT*, I DO.



OH YOU SHOULD BE *EMBARRASSED* ALRIGHT. WHAT A *BLATANT* ATTEMPT TO *CHEAT* YOUR WAY OUT OF A *JAM*. I THOUGHT YOU HAD MORE *RESPECT* FOR YOURSELF THAN THAT, BRIAN.

*CHEAT??!!* FIRK DING --YOU SAYIN' I'M *LYING??*

C'MON BRIAN. GET THAT *HALF-BAKED* EXCUSE OF AN *ARGUMENT* OFF THE TABLE. *NOBODY'S* GOING TO BUY SUCH A LOAD OF *NONSENSE*.

I'M REALLY *DISAPPOINTED* IN YOU BRIAN.

*WHOOAH! GUYS!* IT'S HERE  
- *JUST LIKE HE SAID*.

OF COURSE IT'S THERE!



IT PROVES *NOTHING*, SARA. HE COULD HAVE *SCRAWLED* THAT *NOTATION* ON HIS SHEET AT *ANY TIME*.

PUT YOURSELF IN *MY* SHOES. HOW *PLAUSIBLE* IS YOUR STORY? WE'RE TO BELIEVE THAT *TEFLON* HAS BEEN WEARING SOME STUPID *INVISIBLE HELMET* FOR THE LAST *FIVE YEARS?*





WAIT! I CAN **PROVE** I'M TELLING THE TRUTH. EVERY **MONTH** YOU HAVE US TURN IN **PHOTO COPIES** OF OUR **CHARACTER SHEETS** FOR YOUR **ARCHIVES**. THE **LAST** SHEET I TURNED IN WAS A FULL **TWO WEEKS** BEFORE THE **MEDUSA ENCOUNTER**. I **DEMAND** YOU PULL YOUR **COPY** AND CHECK IT. YOU'LL FIND THE **HELM** AND THE **FACT** **TEFLON** WEARS IT AT **ALL TIME** ANNOTATED -- JUST LIKE I **SAID**.

THAT **WOULD** SETTLE THE MATTER ALL RIGHT. YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO **WITHDRAW** YOUR ARGUMENT BEFORE I **CALL** YOUR BLUFF?

I BELIEVE YOU **BRIAN**. IT SOUNDS **JUST** LIKE SOMETHING YOU'D DO.

THANKS DAVE. AT LEAST **SOMEONE** HAS A LITTLE REGARD FOR MY **INTEGRITY**.

ACCEPT HIS OFFER, BRIAN. NO ONE **BLAMES** YOU. YOU WENT **TOO FAR**.



**A FEW SECONDS LATER AS B.A. DIGS THROUGH HIS ARCHIVES.**

THIS IS **TENSE!** KINDA LIKE THE **O.J. TRIAL** WHEN THEY ASKED HIM TO **PUT** ON THE **GLOVE**.

HEY, YOU DON'T SUPPOSE **BRIAN** HAS POWERS LIKE THE **AMAZING KRESKIN** DO YOU? THAT GUY COULD **WRITE** HIS NAME ON A **PLAYING CARD** STILL IN A **SEALED DECK**.

YOU KNOW BRIAN, SOMETHING JUST **OCCURRED** TO ME ABOUT **CRIMSON'S HELMET**.

OH YEAH? WHAT'S THAT?

IF IT'S **INVISIBLE** WOULDN'T YOU BE ABLE TO **SEE** RIGHT THROUGH IT? AFTER ALL YOU SAID IT GIVES OFF AN **INVISIBLE AURA** SO WOULDN'T THE **HEADS-UP ILLUSION** BE **INVISIBLE** AS WELL?

UH....ER... WELL....UH....

**CRAP!!**

I FIGURE **WHATEVER** THE OUTCOME IT'S GOING TO END WITH A **TABLE** BEING **FLIPPED** AND **HARD FEELINGS**.



UH....ER...ACTUALLY I BELIEVE **CRIMSON** TOOK THAT INTO ACCOUNT WHEN HE...UH....ER...YEAH, HE FOUND A WAY TO **ENGINEER** A SOLUTION AND **WORK** AROUND THAT PROBLEM. THE...UH....ER... THE DETAILS ARE IN MY NOTES SOMEWHERE. I...UH....ER...

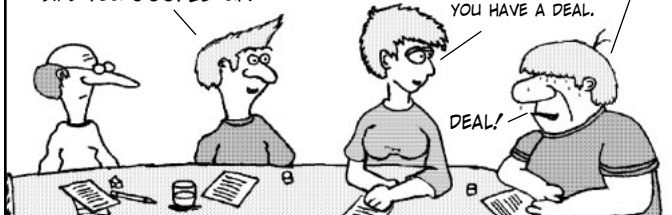
YOU **REALLY** DIDN'T KNOW UNTIL I TOLD YOU - DID YOU? IT'S WRITTEN **ALL** OVER YOUR FACE.

OKAY, OKAY, HOW 'BOUT A FREE **SLOP-N-GO** MINI PAINTING FOR **EACH** OF YOU FOR YOUR SILENCE?

B.A. WASN'T THE **ONLY** ONE WHO WAS **GREEN**. SOUNDS LIKE YOU **GOOFED** UP.

MAKE IT "**TABLE TOP**" QUALITY AND YOU HAVE A **DEAL**.

**DEAL!**



**A FEW MOMENTS LATER....**

OKAY, I LOOKED OVER MY **ARCHIVE COPY** OF YOUR CHARACTER SHEET, BRIAN. I EVEN WENT BACK SEVERAL **YEARS**. TURNS OUT YOU WERE RIGHT -- IT'S ANNOTATED JUST LIKE YOU SAID. YOU WERE BEING **TRUTHFUL**.

I OFFER YOU A VERY **SINCERE** APOLOGY, **OLD FRIEND**. I'M SORRY I **DOUBTED** YOU. I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER.

